

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, GW, US, XF

SUBJECT: PUBLIC COMMENTARY IN FRG ON DISTURBANCE IN
US-EUROPEAN RELATIONS

SUMMARY: FOREIGN MINISTER SCHEEL, INTERVIEWED OCT.
28 ON SECOND WEST GERMAN TELEVISION, REPLIED AT LENGTH TO
QUESTIONS ABOUT A DISRUPTION OF US-FRG AND US-EUROPEAN
RELATIONS, DENYING THAT THERE WAS A CRISIS BUT ADMITTING
THAT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE INTERESTS OF THE US AND THE
EUROPEAN STATES IN THE MIDDLE EAST HAD LED TO SOME MIS-
UNDERSTANDINGS AND HARD FEELINGS. WEST GERMAN DAILY
PRESS CARRIED HEAVY COVERAGE OF THIS SUBJECT OVER WEEKEND
AND IN MONDAY'S PAPERS, MUCH OF IT CRITICAL OF FRG
GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF SITUATION. SOME OF THIS RE-
PORTING, NOTABLY IN OCT. 29 ISSUE OF DER SPIEGEL, IS
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FULL OF DISTORTIONS AND MISSTATEMENTS OF FACT. END

SUMMARY.

1. ASKED WHETHER THE FRG HAD PUBLICLY DISTANCED ITSELF FROM THE US, AS ASSERTED IN WASHINGTON, AND WHETHER IT HAD UNNECESSARILY OFFENDED THE US, AS ASSERTED BY THE OPPOSITION IN THE FRG, SCHEEL ANSWERED IN THE NEGATIVE, POINTING OUT THAT THIS WAS A DIFFICULT SITUATION NOT JUST FOR THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC BUT FOR THE WHOLE WORLD AND THAT EVERYTHING POSSIBLE SHOULD BE DONE TO CALM THE SITUATION RATHER THAN EXACERBATE IT FURTHER. SCHEEL ALLUDE TO THE SPECIAL FRG RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL AND TO THE BACKGROUND OF ITS DELICATE RELATIONS WITH THE ARAB STATES, ONLY RECENTLY RESUMED. HE THEN ATTACKED TWO OF THE MOST CRITICAL OPPOSITION POLITICIANS, CARSTENS AND STRAUSS, FOR HAVING BEEN IN INFLUENTIAL GOVERNMENT POSITION IN 1965 WHEN FRG WEAPONS DELIVERIES TO ISRAEL LED TO THE BREAKDOWN OF WEST GERMAN RELATIONS WITH THE ARAB COUNTRIES.

2. RECALLED TO THE SUBJECT OF THE PROBLEMS BETWEEN BONN AND WASHINGTON AND ASKED SPECIFICALLY WHETHER THE FRG HAD FAILED AT A CRITICAL TIME TO SUPPORT THE US, SCHEEL SAID THE FOLLOWING: "NO. WE EVEN SHOWED UNDERSTANDING FOR THE US EFFORT TO PREVENT THE BALANCE OF ARMAMENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST FROM BECOMING ENTIRELY DISRUPTED, AND (WE APPRECIATED THE FACT) THAT THEY WERE DOING THIS FOR THE SAKE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF ACHIEVING A CEASE-FIRE AND DEVELOPING ON THAT BASIS A LASTING PEACE. WE SHOWED THIS UNDERSTANDING, AND WE ACTED ACCORDINGLY IN THE ALLIANCE AND IN OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE AMERICANS THEMSELVES. BUT, I REPEAT ONCE AGAIN, THERE ARE CERTAIN THINGS THAT ONE CAN DO WHEN ONE IS NEUTRAL IN A DISPUTE, AND THERE ARE CERTAIN THINGS ONE CANNOT DO; AND WE TOLD THE AMERICANS AT AN APPROPRIATE TIME WHAT WE COULD NOT ALLOW."

3. SCHEEL WAS ASKED WHETHER THE US HAD CONSULTED THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT BEFORE STARTING WEAPONS DELIVERIES AND WHETHER THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAD CHANGED ITS POSITION UNDER PRESSURE FROM ARAB GOVERNMENTS, I.E., THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THREAT OF AN OIL BOYCOTT. HE REPLIED WITH THE FOLLOWING WORDS: "THE AMERICANS DID NOT CONSULT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. I MYSELF CALLED THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR IN (COMMENT: WE INTEND PRIVATELY TO SET SCHEEL RIGHT ON THIS POINT) TO ASK HIM AND HE THEN TOLD ME--NOT IN DETAIL BUT RATHER IN GENERAL TERMS--WHAT THE US GOVERNMENT WANTED TO DO TO MAINTAIN THE BALANCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. I REPEAT AGAIN THAT WE SHOWED UNDERSTAND-

ING BECAUSE WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. CERTAIN CONDITIONS HAVE TO BE SATISFIED EVEN TO BRING ABOUT A CEASE FIRE, WHICH IS THE ONLY BASIS ON WHICH PEACE NEGOTIATIONS CAN BEGIN. THAT WAS THE FIRST PHASE, AND ONLY AFTER THE CEASE-FIRE HAD BEEN CONCLUDED DID WE TELL THE US THAT WE WERE GOING ON THE ASSUMPTION, NOW THAT THIS CEASE-FIRE HAD BEEN ATTAINED, THAT NO MORE WEAPONS WOULD BE TRANSPORTED FROM THE FRG TO THE AREA OF CONFLICT."

4. IN REPLY TO A QUESTION AS TO WHETHER THE FRG

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PROTEST AGAINST US ARMS SHIPMENTS HAD HAD TO BE PUBLICIZED SO LOUDLY, SCHEEL REPLIED IN VAGUE TERMS THAT IT WAS OF COURSE HIGHLY DESIRABLE TO KEEP SUCH MATTERS

PRIVATE BUT THAT WHERE CONFLICTING INTERESTS (HE MEANT THE INTERESTS OF ALL PARTIES CONCERNED WITH THE MIDDLE EAST WAR) ARE INVOLVED, ONE OR ANOTHER PARTY USUALLY FINDS IT TO ITS ADVANTAGE TO GO PUBLIC. "WHAT WE DISCUSS QUIETLY WITH THE US," SCHEEL SAID, "AND CONCERNING WHICH WE MUST NATURALLY INFORM OTHERS, BECOMES PUBLIC AT ONE POINT OR ANOTHER--IN THIS CASE IT WAS AN AGENCY, OR VIA AN AGENCY IN CAIRO--BECAUSE SOMEONE IS INTERESTED IN COMMUNICATING IT TO THE PUBLIC." (COMMENT: WE HAVE NO IDEA WHAT HE WAS REFERRING TO.)

5. SCHEEL DID NOT THINK THE FRG/EUROPEAN ATTITUDE IN THE MIDDLE EAST WAR HAD INCREASED THE DANGERS OF A US LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TROOP WITHDRAWAL. NATO WAS NOT INVOLVED IN THE CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE EAST--THIS WAS ALSO THE VIEW OF THE US, BONN'S MOST IMPORTANT ALLY IN NATO. TWO COMPLETELY DIFFERENT THINGS WERE INVOLVED: A CONFLICT IN WHICH THE US WAS INDIRECTLY INVOLVED, AT LEAST IN THE PROCESS OF RESTORING PEACEFUL CONDITIONS, AND, ON THE OTHER HAND, THE TASKS OF NATO. IT WAS EXTRAORDINARILY IMPORTANT TO KEEP THESE SEPARATE, SCHEEL SAID, AND THAT WAS WHAT THE FRG HAD DONE. THAT MEANS, HE SAID, "THAT WE HAVE ACTED VERY MUCH AS LOYAL MEMBERS OF NATO AND, ON THE OTHER SIDE, THAT WE HAVE HAD THESE DIFFICULT BILATERAL PROBLEMS WITH THE US THAT WE HAVE BEEN TALKING ABOUT."

6. THE CONSEQUENCES THAT HE SAW FOR NATO WERE OF A DIFFERENT KIND, SCHEEL SAID. "WE MUST REACH AGREEMENT IN NATO ABOUT HOW THE MEMBERS WILL ACT WITH RESPECT TO ONE ANOTHER WHEN THERE ARE CONFLICTS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD. I CONSIDER IT ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY TO HAVE CONSULTATION AMONGST THE ALLIANCE MEMBERS, FOR THE IRRITATION ON THE EUROPEAN SIDE AROSE PRIMARILY BECAUSE NONE OF THE MEMBERS WAS INFORMED AS TO THE INTENTIONS AND DECISIONS OF THE US IN CONNECTION WITH THE CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE EAST. THAT CREATES IRRITATION AND LEADS TO MISUNDERSTANDINGS."

7. FINALLY, THE MORAL THAT SCHEEL DREW FROM THE WHOLE AFFAIR WAS THAT THE EUROPEANS WOULD HAVE TO WORK BETTER TOGETHER AND ACHIEVE UNION MORE QUICKLY IF THEY WERE TO COUNT FOR ANYTHING. "THE MOST OPPRESSIVE ASPECT OF THIS WHOLE AFFAIR FOR ME," HE SAID, "IS THAT ONCE AGAIN THE EUROPEANS WERE UNABLE TO EXERT ANY INFLUENCE ON THE CONFLICT BECAUSE THEY COULD NOT AGREE IN THE GROUP OF NINE ON A COMMON APPROACH. THIS MEANS THAT IT IS REALLY TIME TO ACHIEVE A EUROPEAN UNION. THEN THE AMERICANS WILL TREAT THE EUROPEANS LIKE EQUAL PARTNERS."

8. FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG (FAZ) HAS FRONT PAGE EDITORIAL STATING THAT BRANDT AND SCHEEL NOW REGRET NOT HAVING SPOKEN MORE CAREFULLY. THE AMERICANS HAD ALREADY MADE THEIR DISPLEASURE KNOWN IN THREE VERSIONS. THESE OUGHT TO HAVE BEEN FOLLOWED BY REASONABLE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ANSWERS BUT SO FAR THERE HAD BEEN NO DIALOGUE. BONN'S HANDLING OF THE AFFAIR WAS ANYTHING BUT A MASTERPIECE OF DIPLOMACY. AMERICAN ANGER WAS IN FACT DIRECTED AT ALMOST ALL ITS NATO PARTNERS, BUT SINCE THE FRG WAS THE ONE THAT TALKED IT WAS ALSO THE ONE THAT GOT THE BRUNT OF THE ATTACKS FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ATLANTIC. NOW ALL NATO MEMBERS HAD REASON TO REFLECT THAT THERE WERE, IN AN ALLIANCE, TWO SIDES TO THE COIN OF SOVEREIGN DISPOSAL OVER ONE'S OWN TERRITORY; THE REVERSE SIDE OF THIS COIN WAS THAT THE AMERICANS COULD NOW DO WHAT EVERYONE IN EUROPE HAS FEARED--WITHDRAW INTO "STRATEGIC ISOLATION" IF THE EUROPEANS LITERALLY CONTINUED TO LEAVE THEM "HANGING IN THE AIR". THUS, THE PAPER SAYS, DEFENSE SECRETARY SCHLESINGER SHOULD BE TAKEN VERY SERIOUSLY. THE FRG, OF ALL COUNTRIES OUGHT TO HAVE CONSIDERED EVERY WORD WITH THE GREATEST CARE INSTEAD OF REACTING AND SPEAKING SO THOUGHTLESSLY AT A TIME OF HIGH TENSION. AS A RESULT, ACCORDING TO FAZ, THE FRG HAS PUT AT RISK MONTHS OF "MODEL COOPERATION" IN THE SEARCH FOR A NEW DEFINITION OF THE ATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP. "NATURALLY," FAZ CONCLUDES, "WASHINGTON KNOWS WHAT PROMPTED THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. THE AMERICANS KNOW ABOUT OUR DEPENDENCY ON ARAB OIL. BUT THEY ALSO KNOW HOW DEPENDENT WE ARE STRATEGICALLY ON THEM. BONN OUGHT TO HAVE CONSIDERED WHICH OF THESE DEPENDENCIES IS THE MORE IMPORTANT."

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9. DIETER CYCON, WRITING IN DIE WELT (RIGHT OF CENTER AND STRONGLY OPPOSED TO THE PRESENT FRG GOVERNMENT) IS CRITICAL OF BOTH SIDES, FOR VERY DIFFERENT REASONS. AMERICA, HE NOTES, WAS TEMPORARILY FORCED TO SEND FRG-BASED WEAPONS TO THE MIDDLE EAST. IF THE DIFFICULTIES THAT AROSE FOR BOTH SIDES AS A RESULT OF THIS HAD TO BE DISCUSSED, THEN THE DISCUSSION OUGHT TO HAVE BEEN IN A LOW VOICE. THAT THE FRG PROTESTED PUBLICLY REFLECTED A DESIRE TO DEMONSTRATE NEUTRALITY AND INDEPENDENCE OF THE US. CONSEQUENTIAL US SANCTIONS WOULD OF COURSE BE GRIST FOR THE MILLS OF NEUTRALISTS IN THE FRG. THE US, ON THE OTHER HAND, WAS TO BE CRITICIZED FOR THE GULLIBLE SUPPORT THAT IT HAS GIVEN TO THE BRANDT GOVERNMENT'S LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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POLICIES ALL ALONG--UNTIL THE PRESENT DISPUTE.

10. STUTTGARTER ZEITUNG (IEPENDENT) STATES THAT IT IS THE FRG'S OWN FAULT IF IT GOT THE "HEAVIEST SLAP IN THE FACE" SINCE IT HAD "BOASTED OF ITS DEMONSTRATION OF NEUTRALITY TOWARD THE US." A CONCILIATORY SPIRIT WAS NOW EVIDENT, HOWEVER, IN THE ATTITUDE TAKEN BY SECRETARY KISSINGER AT HIS OCTOBER 26 MEETING WITH FRG

AMBASSADOR VON STADEN. APPARENTLY, THE PAPER SAYS, KISSINGER CONSIDERED SCHLESINGER'S THREATS EXAGGERATED. "KISSINGER REALIZES," THE PAPER SAYS, THAT "IN A DISPUTE BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND ITS EUROPEAN ALLIES, MOSCOW IS THE PLEASED THIRD PARTY..."

11. BONN'S GENERAL ANZEIGER (INDEPENDENT) HAS WORDS OF CRITICISM FOR BOTH SIDES. THE AMERICANS WERE CHARGING THE EUROPEANS, PARTICULARLY BONN, WITH FAILURE TO IDENTIFY WITH WASHINGTON'S "PRO-ISRAEL POLICY". THE HARSHTEST REPRIMAND WENT TO BONN FOR ITS PROTEST AGAINST US ARMS SHIPMENTS. SINCE THE GERMAN PROTEST COULD NOT AFFECT THOSE SHIPMENTS--THEY WERE ALREADY UNDER WAY--IT WAS OBVIOUSLY INTENDED AS AN ALIBI FOR ARAB EARS. THE QUESTION AROSE, HOWEVER, WHETHER THE EUROPEANS DID NOT HAVE EQUAL GROUNDS FOR COMPLAINT, SINCE THEY WERE NOT INFORMED OF THE ARMS SHIPMENTS FROM THE NATO AREA OR OF THE ALERT OF US FORCES AND THE PRECEDING CRISIS WITH THE USSR. "BUT," THE PAPER CONCLUDES, "MUTUAL RECRIMINATIONS LEAD NOWHERE. THE CRISIS WILL BE BENEFICIAL ONLY IF AMERICANS AND EUROPEANS COME TO CONSIDER EACH OTHER AS PARTNERS WITH EQUAL RIGHTS. WE ARE NO LONGER AMERICA'S JUNIOR PARTNER."

12. OCT. 29 SPIEGEL STARTS A HIGHLY TENDENTIOUS AND INACCURATE CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS WITH THE STATEMENT THAT SCHEEL CALLED THE US AMBASSADOR IN ON OCTOBER 16 "RIGHT AFTER US WEAPONS DELIVERIES HAD BEGUN" AND ASKED HIM TO "TAKE BONN'S POLICY OF NEUTRALITY INTO CONSIDERATION." A WEEK LATER, AFTER A SPATE OF RUMORS ABOUT US WEAPONS SHIPMENTS BY AIR FROM BASES IN THE FRG, STATE SECRETARY FRANK SPOKE WITH THE AMBASSADOR AND, ACCORDING TO SPIEGEL, RECEIVED THE ASSURANCE THAT THE CEASE-FIRE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MEANT THERE WAS NO LONGER A PROBLEM OF WEAPONS DELIVERIES. ON THIS BASIS, FRANK INSTRUCTED FRG EMBASSIES IN ARAB COUNTRIES TO SO NOTIFY THEIR HOST GOVERNMENTS. THE FOLLOWING DAY, FRANK RECEIVED WORD THAT ISRAELI SHIPS WERE STILL BEING LOADED AT BREMERHAVEN AND CALLED IN THE US MINISTER TO STATE THAT THE "CONVENTION ON RELATIONS" GAVE THE US NO LEGAL RIGHT TO USE THE FRG AS A BASE FOR SHIPMENTS OF WEAPONS TO AREAS OF TENSION. STILL NOTHING WAS DONE TO STOP THE ACTIVITIES AT BREMERHAVEN AND ON THE FOLLOWING DAY THE US AMBASSADOR CALLED ON FRANK TO APOLOGIZE FOR ANY DIFFICULTIES THERE HAD BEEN IN CONSULTATION BUT ALSO TO STATE "IN UNMISTAKABLY CLEAR TERMS" THAT THERE WERE LIMITS TO GERMAN SOVEREIGNTY AND THAT THE US RETAINED THE RIGHT TO CONTINUE TO DO WHAT IT CONSIDERED RIGHT AND OPPORTUNE.

THIS, ACCORDING TO SPIEGEL, WAS THE BEGINNING OF A
"COORDINATED ACTION" THAT PEAKED IN STATEMENTS ON OCT.
26 BY SECRETARY SCHLESINGER AND IN THE MEETING OF THE
SAME DATE BETWEEN SECRETARY KISSINGER AND THE GERMAN
AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON. HOWEVER, SPIEGEL STATES,
AFTER THE US HAD MADE CLEAR WHO IS BOSS IN THE ALLIANCE,
THE GERMANS SHOWED THE ISRAELIS WHO IS BOSS AT THE MOUTH
OF THE WESER. THE "PALMAH", WHICH HAD BEEN WAITING ON
THE ROADSTEAD, HAD TO LEAVE GERMAN TERRITORIAL WATERS
AND STEAMED AWAY EMPTY TOWARD ENGLAND. (FYI: AMBAS-
SADOR HILLENBRAND INTENDS TO COMMENT ON THE SPECIOUS
NATURE OF THIS ARTICLE WHEN HE MEETS STATE SECRETARY
FRANK LATE OCTOBER 29. END FYI.)
HILLENBRAND

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